



Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors

1615 Stanley Street • Marcus White Hall, Room 316 • New Britain, CT 06050

CO-CHAIRS SEN. CATHERINE OSTEN AND REP. TONI WALKER

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Feb. 15, 2023

Kari Swanson, M.L.S.

CSU-AAUP

Dear Appropriations Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Osten and Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I'm writing today to urge you to fully fund the four Connecticut State Universities that power Connecticut's economy. CSU-AAUP, the faculty union representing 3,000 faculty members at the universities, vehemently opposes any cuts or flat-funding of our institutions.

I write to you not only as a library faculty member at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), but also as a first-generation graduate alumna of SCSU. Neither of my parents graduated from high school let alone graduated from college. It is well-documented that SCSU is an engine of social mobility, and I write to you as an example of that. It is because of SCSU that I have been an academic librarian and a Connecticut taxpayer for over 23 years. Part of the reason I chose to return to SCSU as a faculty member was to serve students like me.

Public higher education is a public good the cost of which should be borne by the state, but over the decades since I completed my M.L.S. at SCSU state support for the Connecticut State Universities has declined so steeply that it deters our potential students and current students from attending, and from finishing their degrees. Reduced state funding exacerbates enrollment problems and contributes to economic inequality.

Funding for the 17 institutions of the CSCU currently makes up only 1.3% of all appropriated state funds. UCONN receives .9% of state appropriations by itself. In years without HEERF and ARPA the per student funding at UCONN is often more than double that of CSCU. UCONN's students deserve to be supported, but our students are equally worthy. Given the racial and economic demographics of our student bodies in comparison to UCONN this is demonstrably inequitable. And, given that most CSCU graduates stay in and work in Connecticut this is underinvestment in the future of our state.

We support expanding the PACT program to provide students at the State Universities equal access to financial support. We oppose raising tuition on our students, many of whom come from poor and working-class families who are struggling to survive in this economy. Our students cannot afford increases in tuition that outpace student aid and force them to choose between financial stability and their educations and future economic success. Please understand that our students face challenges meeting basic needs like food, housing, and childcare.

About childcare: the Governor's budget ignores the needs of our students along with the needs of many other Connecticut families for childcare. Our student parents need robust childcare programs on our campuses to support their academic success. We have made do and made strides to provide childcare services on our campuses through Federal grants like the US Department of Education CCAMPIS grant at SCSU for which my colleagues Michele Vancour, Lauren Tucker, Kathleen De Oliveira and I applied and were awarded, along with some institutional support, but those amounts are not sufficient to provide the quality and quantity of services that our campuses need to support more than a relative few of our students. We need more funding to provide childcare services on our campuses so that our student parents can attend their classes, meet with their professors, do group course work with their classmates, study, etc.

The share of state funding for the CSUs has steadily declined over the years. This is unacceptable. We are not a business churning out products, but rather a public institution helping to shape the minds of our future. While our enrollment has declined, our students, who recently suffered through a pandemic, need more supports than ever before. We need adequate funding for mental health services, student supports, and yes, enough faculty so we can have small class sizes and time to mentor our students.

I urge you to provide funding to the CSU's that fully accounts for the critical role we play in educating Connecticut's middle- and working classes and thus driving economic mobility and equity.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

